we had opposite us about twenty Spaniards and gypsies, of whom six were women; some of them were very pale, the others tanned like the leather of their shoes (I am saying this out of romanticism, but I think that almost all of them were wearing canvas shoes). Each woman in turn got up and danced, alone or with a partner; the chorus of instruments, the clapping of hands, and the voices beat time to the dances. . . .

The show, somewhat dull in the beginning, was warming up. They had reached perhaps the third dance; the one who was dancing it, an Andalusian woman probably, with a pink complexion, was shaking her abdomen and her arms in the manner of Algerian Jewesses and was waving two silk scarves, one the color of a locust-bean and the other cherry-red, which she was holding in her fingers. Toward the end of the dance she began to spin, slowly at first, then faster and faster, first in the center of the hall, then in a big circle, like a teetotum about to fall, along the row of spectators, whom she brushed. At the moment she passed in front of me, slap, I received the scarf in my face and it fell on my knees. I should have liked to think it was through awkwardness and by chance; but no, it was direct, sudden and premeditated, discreet . . . This is what I must have grasped at the very moment, as I felt a rush of blood dazzling me —for this little wile became clearer in the light of a song that a little seamstress used to sing when she came to work at our house; she used to sing it when she was quite sure my mother couldn't hear her; I have since learned that it was simply *La Chanson de Madame Angot,* "not at all a prude; her speech was lewd," etc. One stanza told of the sultan who "threw her the handkerchief." I was well aware of what the gesture meant; obviously it must have been currently used in certain lands.

Even redder than the scarf, which I hastily hid under my coat, I

strove to believe that my mother had seen nothing, though most painfully aware of the possible consequences of my "adventure/*. . . . Meanwhile the celebration continued. I paid only a mild attention to the dancing of a couple of *gitanos;* but, just as this new dance ended in a delirium and the audience's applause burst out, I was amazed to see the gypsy girl suddenly leave the dance, take a little kerchief from her bodice and throw it not far from us onto the knees of an old dandy who, instead of applauding, was pounding on the floor with his cane. The dandy surely knew the customs, and I didn't lose sight of him for an instant. What was he going to do?

Very calm and smiling, he took the little kerchief, felt in his vest-pocket, took out a silver coin, very ostensibly rolled it up in a corner of the kerchief, made a knot over it, then, from a distance, threw it toward the Spanish girl, . . . Reassured, I took the red scarf out from under jny coat and asked my mother for a coin. Now that I was recovering my